Vol. 101 contained nearly 40 papers with a wide geographical coverage from South America to the Philippines, Tristan da Cunha to Israel and Egypt, U.S.A., the West Indies to West, South and East Africa, Madagascar and Mozambique. Including those involved in multiple authorship, the papers involved authors from the United Kingdom or U.K. expatriates (28), U.S.A. (20), South Africa (5), Canada (2), Belgium (2), Austria (1) and Israel (1), some being counted more than once.

It is not intended to continue the error perpetuated in Vol. 101 by which pagination was mistakenly continued direct from Vol. 100 (4) and then, necessarily, for the rest of the volume.

While the Editor was abroad from April to September, we were fortunate enough to be able to call upon the services of C. W. Benson, with his long experience of the *Bulletin*. We are most grateful to him for seeing the June and September issues into print and for editing with his usual expertise some of the papers in them as well as others submitted in that period.

The audited accounts for 1981 are not yet available but copies will be tabled at the A.G.M. and published in a later number of the *Bulletin*. Members wishing to see a copy before the A.G.M. should inform the Hon. Treasurer.

A major extension in distribution of the Stripe-backed Prinia *Prinia gracilis* in Somalia

by J. S. Ash

Received 6 May 1981

The Stripe-backed Prinia *Prinia gracilis* in Africa is known from 2 subspecies confined to the northeast of the continent. The nominate form is stated by White (1960) to enter "Sudan from Kerma to Khartoum in Nile Valley", and a darker race, *P. g. carlo*, along the "Red Sea coast from Red Sea province of Sudan to Zeyla on border of British Somaliland". Archer & Godman (1961) also indicate a coastal distribution for *carlo*, but extend its range eastwards in Somalia as far as Bulhar (10°24′N, 44°24′E); and from the specimens —all coastal—plotted in Hall & Moreau (1970) the range is extended somewhat further east to c.10°27′N, 45°00′E near Berbera. The impression is given by these authors, and confirmed for Ethiopia by Urban & Brown (1971), that *carlo* has an entirely coastal distribution.

This restriction to a coastal habitat is not entirely true for Somalia, and definitely is not the case in Ethiopia (Fig. 1). In a journey in May 1979 with J. E. Miskell and A. A. Murshid along the northern coast of Somalia from Zeila (11°21′N, 43°28′E) to Berbera (10°26′N, 45°02′E), we found this species to be very common, particularly in the extensive *Suaeda* bush on the great flats behind the coastal dunes. However, inland of this zone the species was also common, particularly in Tamarisk scrub in the dry wadis, even up to 35 km inland, such as at Geriad (10°55′N, 43°22′E) at 75 km south of Zeila on the track from Borama (09°56′N, 43°11′E). We also found it to be fairly common on Aibat (11°31′N, 43°27′E), the most distant of the islands in the Gulf of Aden off Zeila.

In Ethiopia this prinia occurs much further inland. Between Aseita (11°34′N, 41°27′E) and Tendaho (11°40′N, 40°57′E) along the Awash River in the Danakil desert, I found it in several years in the period 1970-1977, particularly in dense Tamarisk woodland, but also along the irrigation channels at Tendaho. Tendaho is 200 km from the nearest sea, but to the

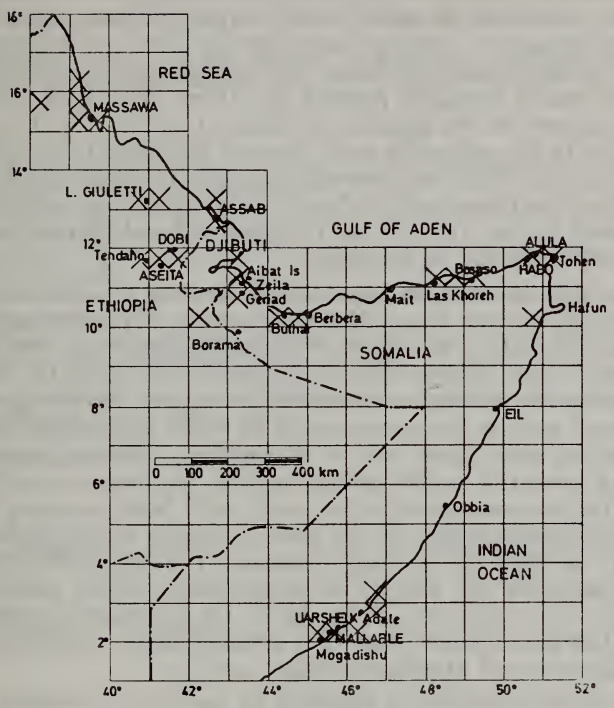

Fig. 1. The distribution by ½° squares of the Stripe-backed Prinia *Prinia gracilis* in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia. X = recorded in the respective ½° square. (Drawing by Alain Peeters).

south and west of there the species is unknown. However, to the north and nearer to the coast, Dr. D. Summers-Smith (*in litt.* 11 Nov 1972) reported it from Lake Giuletti (13°15′N, 41°00′E) in 1972, and to the east I found the birds in 3 years actually below sea level in the Dobi depression (11°53′N, 41°42′E). On the Red Sea coast it occurs in a variety of coastal vegetation, including young mangroves. It was common around Djibouti (11°35′N, 43°09′E) when I was there in December 1975.

In 1978 I first found Stripe-backed Prinias on 3 November in a narrow belt of *Atriplex* growing on beach-head dunes in the Mallable area (02°12′N, 45°38′E) at 35 km northeast of Mogadishu in southern Somalia. Since then I have searched many kilometres of coastline from 45 km northeast of Uarsheik (02°18′N, 45°49′E) to Kismayu (00°22′S, 42°33′E) and beyond and found this prinia only at the northern end of this stretch of coast, at 6 sites which are (Fig. 1.), from north to south:—30 km northeast of Uarsheki (=Uarsciek) (02°26′N, 46°02′E); 14 km northeast of Uarsheik (02°22′N, 45°45′E); Mallable area; 20 km northeast of Mogadishu (02°08′N, 45°31′E); 14 km north of Mogadishu (02°07′N, 45°29′E); Mogadishu airport (02°02′N, 45°19′E).

During another journey with J. E. Miskell along parts of the east coast and eastern section of the north coast in April and May 1980, several *P. gracilis* were present in *Atriplex* at 42 km (03°00'N, 46°36'E) and 49 km (03°05'N, 46°42'E) north of Adale, and another at Hafun Bay (10°18'N, 50°53'E) in coastal Tamarisk. Around the "Horn" the species was common in low mangrove in the lagoons at Habo (11°47'N, 50°32'E) and Alula (11°58'N, 50°15'E), and also in wadi Tamarisk at Tohen (11°44'N, 51°15'E). Along the north coast it was common to abundant in coastal Tamarisk at the mouth of the Garas wadi (11°17'N, 49°02'E), and at 29 km (11°17'N, 48°25'E) and 83 km (11°15'N, 48°52'E) east of and also at Las Khoreh (11°09'N, 48°11'E), also in Tamarisk.

The newly found southern population is confined to a 200 km stretch of coastline northeast from Mogadishu, but there are only a few sites along this coast where the habitat is suitable, if indeed the species is restricted, as it seems to be, to the *Atriplex* there. The new records along the north coast and extending down the east coast to Hafun suggest that the species will in fact be found more or less continuously all round the Somalia coast where suitable habitat exists from Zeila to Mogadishu. There are, however, long stretches of unsuitable coastal habitat, such as the extensive sea-cliffs in the north and the bare sand dunes further south, and I failed to see any in a search of 16 km of suitable habitat on the coast and wadis around Mait (10°58'N, 47°04'E) in the north in May 1979, and none on the east coast around Obbia (05°21'N, 48°33'E) and Eil (07°58'N, 49°49'E) in April 1980. South of Mogadishu, its presence may be less likely, for the range of several species ceases in this area (notably that of 3 endemic larks, *Calandrella obbiensis, Alaemon hamertoni* and *Mirafra somalica*).

The southern population is separated by 1000 km of coastline from the nearest north Somalia birds, suggesting that there might be a taxonomic difference between the two. However, 2 fresh specimens from Zeila in May do not differ from Mallable birds.

Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1960) state that *carlo* breeds in July on the coast of Sudan; in Ethiopia eggs are laid in all months from December to May (Urban & Brown 1971), and I saw birds building at the end of December at Massawa. Nothing is known about the breeding season of *P. gracilis* in the north of Somalia, but in the Mogadishu area 3 pairs laid in December and one in May. The nests were a loose untidy dome of rootlets and dry *Cymodocea,* firmly lined with a thick cup of felted seed-heads of an *Aerva* sp., placed 30-60 cm up in *Atriplex* bushes in sites sheltered from the strong wind. No eggs have been seen, but broods of young numbered 2, 3, 3 and 4.

Prinias may be difficult to find during periods of strong monsoon winds, for they then remain low in thick cover. There is some suggestion of local movement, for at 2 sites which I had searched twice previously without seeing any, I found what were apparently new arrivals in March and April. At the first site, on a day of light wind, there were 2 birds flying above the beach at 6-10 m heading into the breeze. Every now and then they dropped into *Atriplex* bushes where they called excitedly before taking off again. Possibly the birds from Mogadishu in February and March were wanderers from slightly further north. In these various local populations, worthwhile further investigation could be made into their choice of habitat, namely the

inland association with *Tamarix,* the coastal association in the north with *Suaeda, Tamarix* and mangrove and with *Atriplex* in the south.

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First Zambian records of Chestnut-banded Sandplover *Charadrius pallidus* and observations of White-fronted Sandplover *C. marginatus* and Cape Teal *Anas capensis* at the same locality

by P. B. Taylor

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CHARADRIUS PALLIDUS

On 23 August 1980 I found a Chestnut-banded Sandplover *C. pallidus* feeding alongside Kittlitz's Sandplovers *C. pecuarius* at the margin of a permanent pool at Akatiti Dam, an inactive mine tailings dam at Luanshya, Zambia (13°10'S, 28°24'E). The pool is in an area of bare sand and its margins have very little fringing vegetation: during the dry season of 1980 the area contained breeding *C. pecuarius* and a few feeding *C. marginatus.*

The *C. pallidus* was easily visible because of its very pale upperparts, whereas the darker *C. pecuarius* were difficult to see against the wet sand. I observed the bird at distances down to 15 metres, and after feeding it sat on damp sand and dozed. Its head appeared larger and broader than that of *C. pecuarius,* although both species were about the same in body size. Above, it was very pale, plain grey with only a slight brownish tinge. The head pattern was distinctive: forecrown to nape pale grey, forehead and face white with a broad white stripe over the eye. There was a narrow dark smudge behind the eye, and dark colouring on the lores not extending to the base of the bill. Below, the bird was white with a complete and well-defined narrow brown band across the base of the neck merging at the sides with the grey of the upperparts. The bill was black, distinctly shorter and finer than the bills of *C. pecuarius* or *C. marginatus,* the legs were greenish-grey,